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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY Belgian Congo

SUBJECT Congo/Radio Congo Belge

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1. [REDACTED] we spoke with Mr. Theumissen Karel, Director of Radio Congo Belge. He said that the Congo is the first country in Central Africa to broadcast special programs to the natives. There are great problems connected with the success of its program: the great size of the country; the vast difference in interests (missions, schools, etc., want different types of programs); approach to the natives (they must not be talked down to); 145 different languages; and distribution of receivers are some of them. To overcome the problem of receiver distribution, they have been putting in public address systems. (The British do not like this.) Public address systems have been installed in 52 centers. They are frequently installed in such places as medical centers, veterinary offices, etc.
2. "Two to three thousand natives have their own radios. Many letters are received by Radio Congo Belge from the natives commenting favorably on the educational program which is on one and one-half hours at noon and one and one-half hours at night.
3. "There are 150 voluntary correspondents who send in local news. They appear to be very honest, and they are dignified in submitting their news. The native population is apt not to be interested in the fact that the Colonial Minister is here, but rather in the fact that a new bridge is in process of construction. Some programs in special folk lore are prepared for different regions, and the colonists bring in their workers to listen to the programs. (They hope, in this way, to create a community spirit.) Radio Congo Belge expects to receive 15,000 letters from natives this year. This estimate indicates a growth of community spirit already.
4. "Musical programs emphasize the music folk-lore. Natives do not, as a rule, like jazz, but do like South American rhythms.
5. "Educational programs include things like a sentence spoken in French with two errors which are to be discovered by the listener. This particular device has raised a good deal of interest, and stimulated many discussions among native listeners. Geography lessons have been produced over the radio.
6. "Broadcasts are given in different languages according to the day. For instance, Monday broadcasts are in Lingala, Tuesday in the language of the Kasai, Wednesday in Swahili, Thursday in Bas-Congo, Friday in French and Lingala, Saturday and Sunday usually in French."

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